

# The LENINIST

'Marxism' Today p2

Communists, Labourites and the unemployed p2-3

Labour and Ireland p4

Labour Party conference special

## Leninism not Labourism

**T**HIS YEAR'S Labour Party conference will be a watershed. In the early 1980s the fortunes of the left in the Labour Party were riding high. To some it looked like it was only a matter of time before the party was in its hands. Now the left is fragmented, directionless and demoralised.

In January 1981, constitutional changes were pushed through, shifting power in the party from MPs to the constituencies and the trade unions and, in the October of that year, Tony Benn came within a hair's breadth of winning the deputy leadership. Many leftists gave up all hope of building a revolutionary party and instead declared that the fate of socialism lay in the Labour Party — at Benn's urging they joined in large numbers.

Instead of finding the working class in the constituencies, these leftists found each other. Instead of transforming the Labour Party, the leftists have themselves been transformed into Kinnock's dogbodies.

There is no better time than now for working class militants to face up to the fact that the Labour Party is useless as a vehicle for socialist change. What its leaders call 'socialism' is, in truth, merely a watered down version of Thatcher's pro-capitalism. This is something made crystal clear in the Kinnock/Hattersley statement of principles, *Aims and Values*. Life outside of the Labour Party is full of difficulties. It is hard — but being a revolutionary has nothing to do with having an easy life. Capitalism cannot be ended through reforming it away. It will have to be overthrown via a revolution. Those, who like us, genuinely want socialism have no choice: we have to build a revolutionary party — a Communist Party — which will win the hearts and minds of the masses.

Because the Labour Party is, to its very marrow, committed to capitalism and playing by the rules of capitalist society, it has throughout its history shunned workers engaged in struggle. Lenin rightly branded it the "bourgeois party of the working class". Miners, P&O seafarers, postal workers, are merely the latest in a long line of workers fighting for their basic rights, who have been seen in terms of damaging Labour's respectability, rather than brothers and sisters in need of solidarity.

As a parliamentary party, the Labour Party has performed disastrously for the working class. During two world wars, Labour acted as a loyal recruiting sergeant for imperialism. In government, it has been little different from the Tories. Even its much vaunted Atlee government saw strike breaking and vicious colonial wars. The Labour Party is the party which deployed the nuclear bomb, took Britain into Nato and sent troops

onto the streets of Derry and Belfast.

The best that the Labour Party has ever managed to do is to introduce welfare reforms which have been fully in line with the interests of capitalism. That this is the case is easily shown: throughout the swings and roundabouts of the post World War II long boom period the Tories maintained and added to these, rather than reversed them.

Today, that long boom is a distant memory and the Labour Party is no longer the alternative party of government. Capitalism is heading for another general crisis. Consequently, it can no longer afford to grant meaningful concessions to the working class.

In response to this, the Tories, under their class war general Thatcher, have been forced to destroy the consensus that dominated post-World War II politics in Britain. Primarily at the expense of the bottom and middle section of the working class, since 1979 the Tories have launched a single-minded drive to reorganise and streamline British capitalism. This is the significance of Thatcherism.

To carry out this programme, it was necessary not only to ditch all traces of Butskellism, but to create a new consensus — not so much between classes, but more within bourgeois culture. This has created a general shift to the right.

The Labour Party, as well as the Liberal Democrats and Owen's SDP, have in their different ways adapted to the new Thatcherite consensus. Because the Labour Party is a *bourgeois* party of the working class, it accepts the dominant ideas in society — which in bourgeois society are bourgeois ideas — and serve the interests of the bourgeoisie. And for all Thatcher's idiosyncrasies, who can doubt that her government serves the socio/economic interests of British capitalism?

The drive of the Tory Party — the preferred governing party of the bourgeoisie — to reorganise British capitalism and break with the old consensus has inevitably precipitated a profound crisis in the Labour Party.

The right, which usually has the initiative, has sought to bring the party into line with Thatcherism. It has to do this if it is to be considered by bourgeois opinion a safe alternative to the Tories. This is what lies behind the Labour leadership's policy reviews and the junking of old shibboleths. Labour now accepts the European Community, the Tories' shackling of the trade unions and sings the praises of the market. Benn is spot on when he talks of the Thatcherisation of the Labour Party.

What all this underlines is that the Labour Party has reverted to the role it played before 1945. It is again a party of crisis. It is no longer the alternative — certainly not the natural — party of govern-

ment. If the Tories made a major blunder at home or abroad, then there is a good chance that the Labour Party, with a suitably 'Thatchnockite' ideology, would be pushed into office in order to act as a safety valve. Nonetheless, that Labour has already humiliatingly lost three general elections in a row and looks like losing a fourth, shows how deep the crisis in Labourism is.

Not surprisingly, the Labour Party's record in opposing the Thatcher Tory government has been lamentable. Let us briefly examine it:

- Outside parliament, the Labour Party has sponsored a few cynical stunts such as Jarrow '86, and jumped on the anti-apartheid and CND bandwagons. This has had no noticeable effect on the Tories. Indeed for all the screams of protest, we have seen Labour council after Labour council carry out what they like to call 'Tory cuts'.

- The situation in parliament has been no better. Kinnock has proved no match for Thatcher. Nor for that matter has the parliamentary party as a whole. There has not been one motion of censure since the last election in 1987. No wonder many see the cross benches in the House of Lords as being far more effective on such questions as the GLC, poll tax, social security and housing benefit and education reform, than the Labour Party in the House of Commons.

It might have been expected that the pathetic adaptation to Thatcherism by the Labour right would provide the ideal conditions for the left of social democracy to capture the leadership of the party. The fact of the matter is that the crisis of Labourism affects the left even more deeply than the right.

The left wing of the Labour Party has no viable alternative to 'Thatchnockism'. Benn's leadership campaign, his and Heffer's 'crusade for socialism', has exposed the Labour left as muddled and whimsical. As shown, for example, by the Chesterfield conferences, its programme is a liquorice allsorts mixture of utopian socialism and old fashioned Labourite reformism.

The Labour left has no understanding of socialism. Scientifically, socialism is the first stage of communism — not an aim in itself but a stepping stone to the society of the future. Socialism does not, and cannot, evolve gradually out of capitalism; it requires a proletarian revolution and a proletarian dictatorship.

For the Labour left, 'socialism' will be ushered in via the bourgeois state carrying out a series of sweeping radical reforms. Nationalisation is not a method capital uses to maintain its overall rates of profit, but the encroachment of 'socialism' on capitalist property which is always seen as individual. The Labour left like to dismiss our

insistence that socialism can only come through revolution and the smashing of the bourgeois state as utopianism. But socialism has never come through social democracy and it never will. It is the left Labourites, not we communists, who are the utopians.

Capitalism's drift towards general crisis has served to further expose the utopianism of left Labourism and its irrelevancy to the needs of the working class.

The Benn/Heffer campaign was always doomed to fail. It has also failed to generate any excitement — even the bourgeois media has not bothered to vent its fury so irrelevant has it seemed. In 1981 Benn was vilified. Now he is ignored. Only the likes of the SWP saw his campaign as a positive thing. For them it provided an opportunity to argue the 'ideas'. In the real world, however, the Benn/Heffer campaign was not interested in ideas. All it could offer was the tired old reformist nostrums of the past.

Given this, and the string of defeats the bosses and their Tory government have inflicted on our class, it is hardly surprising that since 1979 the Labour left has fragmented. Kinnock's sweeping victory over Benn will only confirm the marginalisation of the Labour left.

That the Benn/Heffer ticket can only command real support in the constituencies is in itself no bad thing. This is where the activists are. The problem is that the Labour left is no general staff of the working class. The Labour left lacks organisational, as well as ideological, cohesion. It is amorphous, full of well meaning sincerity, but it cannot really deliver anything other than platitudes.

It would, of course, be utterly stupid *a la* RCP to declare the Labour left, let alone the Labour Party itself, to be dead. The Labour Party remains the only credible alternative to the Tories in the minds of the majority of advanced workers. This is something that revolutionaries cannot afford to wish away. It must be confronted and overcome. So must the fact that this state of affairs is primarily due to the continuing success of the Labour left in fostering illusions that the party can be changed into a vehicle for socialist change.

The Labour left has a *sympiotic* relationship with the Labour right. Both wings of Labourism are constantly at war but, at the end of the day, they both need each other. The Labour right presents to the bourgeois establishment the acceptable face of 'socialism'. On the other hand, the Labour left holds out the promise of the 'real thing'.

To overcome this situation, more is necessary than to just make propaganda. It is necessary to build an alternative. Attempts to do this in the past have failed. That is true, but so have revol-

utions. Past failures should be learned from, and not be used as an excuse to do nothing.

The conditions for doing this are far from ideal. Mass activity is at a relatively low level. The left in Britain is after excuses rather than answers. Nevertheless this does not mean nothing can be done. *The Leninist* has shown through fighting around such central questions as unemployment, Employment Training and Ireland, that winning workers to the conviction that what is necessary is the building of a genuine Communist Party.

More than that, it is perfectly clear that the present stagnation in the class struggle is a passing stage. The boss class still needs to score a strategic victory over us if it is to maintain its international competitiveness. And, of course, a new general crisis of capitalism is looming. The present stability is fragile and doomed to shatter. So the future for communists offers all sorts of dangers, but also immense possibilities. As revolutionaries we could not wish for more.

In contrast, the future for the Labour left is bleak indeed. If the Blackpool conference agrees to the leadership's *Aims and Values*, it will lay the ideological basis for a sweeping purge of the Labour Party. Not only *Militant* will find themselves at odds with this new 'fundamental' document of Labourism, so too will Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and presumably the vast majority of those who supported their election campaign.

The crisis of the Labour left is reaching a new turning point. Of that we can be certain.

Kinnock initiated the drafting of *Aims and Values* at the urging of the establishment media. It was not something he did of his own volition. Given his grovelling before bourgeois respectability, who can doubt that if the media demanded Benn's head he would oblige?

A sweeping purge could propel the Labour left into forming a new ILP by default. Either that or the left — putting staying in the Labour Party above everything else — would further water down its principles. Neither would produce anything of long lasting positive significance for the working class. Our class needs a revolutionary leadership. For this, what is needed is a break from Labourism in all its forms. That said, developments in the Labour Party could provide a swathe of recruits for communism.

Those in the Labour Party who sincerely want socialism in Britain have a choice. They can either maintain their loyalty to Labourism and in practice betray socialism, or they can break from Labourism and join the hard but vital work of building a genuine Communist Party. What our class needs is Leninism not Labourism.

Jack Conrad





Fortnightly paper of the Leninists:  
for a genuine Communist Party

A FEW YEARS ago, the suggestion that a leading member of the Labour Party right would agree to speak on the platform of the Communist Party of Great Britain would be met with scepticism. A few years ago, the suggestion that a leading member of the Labour Party right would hail the latest discussion document produced by the CPGB would be dismissed as absurd.

Yet this is precisely what has happened. What is going on? Has the world been turned upside-down and inside-out? Has communism penetrated the Labour Party to such an extent that it has achieved intellectual hegemony over the entire labour movement, left, right and centre? As everyone knows, this is not the case. What is going on is perfectly explainable and is not at all dramatic. In fact it is a little sad and rather prosaic.

That Brian Gould – the darling of the right in the Labour Party – is writing in *Marxism Today*, that he has praised the CPGB's *Facing up to the future* in such fullsome terms and has agreed to address a fringe meeting organised by *Marxism Today*, is not an indication of his softening attitude towards communism. And it certainly is not a result of the world being turned upside-down let alone inside-out.

He has no fear of being associated with *Marxism Today*. It has already interviewed bishops, police chiefs and a host of Tory big wigs, not least Edwina Curry. Appearing on its front cover is now rather chic among aspiring bourgeois politicians. For all that the Eurocommunists of *Marxism Today* and the CPGB might like to believe, Gould is using them in the most cynical fashion.

We doubt very much that Gould is bowled over by *Facing up to the future*. It is a second rate piece of Fabianism. What Gould finds useful about the document is who has produced it. The fact that the Communist Party is in effect calling most of the principled positions of left reformism – the AES, opposition to the EC and nationalisation – old fashioned fundamentalism is a gift. It is the perfect weapon with which to beat the Labour Party left. "You can't accuse me of betraying socialism when the communists say your politics belong to the ark" he can argue. Using the CPGB – which not so long ago was the 'think tank' of the left – against the left is so much easier than using something home grown from the right of Labourism.

Having made the point that Gould is not just about to apply to 16 St John Street for membership of the CPGB, it is essential to turn to the state of the CPGB itself. It is quite clear that the Eurocommunists have succeeded in turning it not only into a neo-Fabian rump, but an open ally of the right in the labour movement. No wonder *Marxism Today* has earned the praise of the establishment media.

It must also be said that what the Eurocommunists are doing – ingratiating themselves with the class enemy – is fully in line with the theory and practice of Gorbachev. The Gorbachev leadership is trying to turn the Soviet Union into a market economy, and in doing so has earned the admiration of reactionaries the world over (not least Brian Gould).

The CPGB has joined in the chorus of praise for the capitalist restorationist policies of *perestroika*. It is a true Gorbachevite party.

That this is the case should put paid to all illusions that the CPGB has anything to do with communism or, for that matter, can be won back to communism. The rot has gone too far. For the sake of acceptability in the eyes of the boss class, the CPGB has been prepared to sell its soul. It has been prepared to be used in the most distasteful manner. It is now like the Labour Party always was, a tool in the armoury of the bourgeoisie – designed to dupe the working class.

A new and genuine Communist Party will have to be built. A Communist Party that will not hesitate to criticise the left of the Labour Party. We make no bones about that. But at the same time, a party that will earn the respect of all real socialists in that party and the bitter hatred of the right.

*The Editor*

Six month subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5; Europe £8; Rest of World £10 (airmail £17.50). Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £10; Institutions £20; Europe £16; Institutions £26; Rest of World £20 (airmail £35); Institutions £30 (airmail £45). Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. All cheques payable to November Publications Ltd. Printed by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), Unit 5 St Marks Industrial Est., 439 North Woolich Road, London E16 2BS. Published by: November Publications, BCM Box 928, London copyright October 1988 ISSN 0262-1649

OUR HEADLINE may puzzle some. After all, the experience of unemployment has, in one way or another, touched every working class home in Britain over the last decade.

No worker can afford to be complacent about his/her job anymore. Many working class youth leaving school in the late 1980s can look forward to either being dragooned onto slave labour schemes, or simply living life without any source of income at all ... the idea of finding real work at decent rates of pay in most parts of the country is simply a sick joke. Britain has become synonymous with mass unemployment.

'Workers don't have to be told what unemployment is', some militants may argue, 'they know only too well'.

In fact, there is enormous confusion in the British working class movement about the nature and causes of unemployment. And if we are not even sure what unemployment actually is, how can we ever effectively fight it?

The urgency of establishing clarity on this question is a vital necessity for our class. Unemployment is still – despite all the government attempts to harass unemployed workers off the register – at around 3 million (it could be much higher of course). And this is at a time before capitalism has been hit by a new general crisis. When that crisis breaks, unemployment could be tripled, quadrupled.

Mass unemployment then, is a threat that is not only going to continue to hang over the head of the organised workers' movement: it is a threat that is going to grow and become more menacing.

## Capitalism

The ruling class attempt to present mass unemployment almost in terms of a 'natural disaster', like floods or plagues of locusts. Given the lack of an effective working class opposition, this is certainly a notion that they have managed to lodge quite firmly in British popular consciousness.

In fact, the official labour movement in Britain does not have a qualitatively different approach to that of the bourgeoisie. Mass unemployment is portrayed as the result of "Tory policies". Various packages of "alternative policies" are urged on the government in order to "start to tackle the problem of mass unemployment" as a recent TUC pamphlet put it.

In other words, the fact that 3 million workers in Britain are condemned to the living death of unemployment, is viewed as an accident of policy which can be overcome, logically enough, by adopting different policies.

This is simply wrong. In fact, the bleak horror of unemployment is a product of irrational economic workings of capitalism as a system, not the particular policy orientations of this or that administration. This is a vital idea to grasp, and it is only on the basis of this understanding that we can actually organise a genuine fightback.

The fact that under the Tories unemployment has doubled, is often cited as evidence of the 'callous' or even 'mad' nature of their policies: yet the Labour Wilson/Callaghan government also doubled the unemployment rate! This is a disgraceful fact that too many Labour Party members (conveniently) forget when castigating the Tories.

Unemployment is not the product of the policy weaknesses of the particular administration that happens to be running capitalism at any particular moment. In order to fight unemployment then, we have to attack the system that causes it in the first place. And can the Labour Party do this? On the evidence of unemployed struggles over the last 60 years, it is clear that the Labour Party, as a party committed to managing capitalism, rather than uprooting and destroying it, is simply incapable of leading a fight against the horror of unemployment.

## Unemployed Struggles – 1919-1936

If rank and file Labour Party members are really serious about wanting to fight unemployment, we recommend that they start by looking at *Unemployed Struggles – 1919-1936*, the book by leading Communist Party member of his day, Wal Hannington. They will see there the absolutely shameful record of the Labour Party in relation to the unemployed during that period of mass unemployment. But also, they will learn of probably one of the most inspiring histories of working

# Unemployment and how to



Organising the fightback: UWC supporters

class action in the traditions of the workers' movement in Britain.

All too often, the history of militant working class struggle, with communist work running through it like a binding thin red thread, is deliberately forgotten both by the ruling class and their lying media and also by those so-called leaders of our class who prefer collaboration with the bosses to waging class war against them.

Thus the Jarrow Crusade of 1936 is lauded by the likes of Kinnock and Willis and remembered with fond, 'soft focus' sentimentality by the bourgeois media. But then, the fighting, revolutionary story of the mass, communist-led National Unemployed Workers Movement, which dwarfed the Jarrow stunt in size, scope and importance, is ignored.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement had its roots in rank and file shop stewards' and workers' committees formed during World War I. These bodies mushroomed in response to the abject capitulation of the official trade union and Labour leaders to the imperialist war effort. As the bureaucrats would not defend even the most basic of workers' rights and conditions against the bosses' clamour for speed ups and expanded production, they were by-passed by the rank and file organisations which became an increasingly powerful force between 1915 and 1918. After the war, however, the power of this movement was progressively undermined by mass unemployment.

The slump of 1920 bumped the unemployment figure up to two million by the Autumn of that year. Obviously, this undercut the power of the shop stewards and workers committees, but it also gave the bosses a golden opportunity to sack leading shop stewards and militants, Wal Hannington included.

As the already horrendous conditions of unemployed workers and their families worsened, the first green shoots of organisation began to appear. At first, these were merely local, mainly ex-servicemen's organisations, which, as Hannington pointed out "... had no clear working class policy and they appeared to be formed purely for charity-mongering purposes".

However with the injection of the expertise, militancy and revolutionary dynamism of the many sacked shop steward and workers' committee leaders, the existing unemployed organisations were transformed. Hannington explains "... (we) realised that these embryonic unemployed organisations - which, after all, had risen out of the despair of the unemployed masses - could be developed on working class lines with a clear policy and



# ment: What it is o fight it



the Bournemouth TUC

could become a mighty force for improvement in the conditions of the unemployed and for the protection of working class standards in general. All they needed was the proper guidance and leadership." (*Unemployed Struggles*, p15).

Now that leadership was provided by the likes of Hannington and his comrades ... and centrally by an event of historic significance which Hannington took a full part in, the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920.

The NUWM was founded at a conference on April 15, 1921 and from then to its demise in 1939, it fought for the interests both of unemployed workers and for our class as a whole. The difference between the way a revolutionary influenced movement like the NUWM fought unemployment and the approach of reformist organisations like the Labour Party was starkly illustrated in the fight against cuts in benefits imposed in 1934.

Late in 1934, the government's Unemployment Assistance Board published new rates of benefit representing a heavy cut in scales. At the same time, wholesale disallowances from benefit took place by the operation of the new rigid means test.

In response, Britain was convulsed by an unprecedented wave of mass demonstrations of the unemployed and their supporters, led by the NUWM. By the middle of January 1935, thousands of unemployed workers were marching every day in every town and city in the country. Sixty thousand unemployed and employed workers marched in the Rhondda Valley to Pontypridd on January 20, 1935; the next day, 40,000 marched from the outlying mining villages into Merthyr for a huge demonstration; on January 23, 20,000 Glasgow workers marched to the city council demanding the proposed UAB cuts were withdrawn and again the streets of Pontypridd in South Wales were packed with protesters as 20,000 workers marched.

Day after day, tens of thousands led by the NUWM marched against attacks on the unemployed. But the TUC and the leadership of the Labour Party, at best, remained aloof from the action and at worst, actually threatened local organisations with expulsion and proscription for involving themselves in the mass movement.

The Abertillery trades council, for example, was threatened with disaffiliation for participating in the huge demonstrations in the Monmouthshire valley. In a letter outlining its defence, the trades council exposed the criminal inaction of the misleaders of the official labour movement:

"When the Bill had passed through the House of Commons it seems that the official movement had accepted the defeat and the only hope that they gave was 'Wait for a Labour government with a majority' ... They never gave a lead to the workers to fight and resist this attack. They let the matter slide and hoped for the best, but the workers, employed and unemployed, wanted and demanded action. They wanted to fight and resist this damnable and iniquitous attack on them and they wanted a lead ... All we ask for is action ..."

The reply of TUC bureaucrat, Mr EM Thomas, was illuminating as it made explicit the contempt that the leadership of the reformist labour movement had for the unemployed working class and their demands for action:

"It appears that your council feel that the action taken by a few Communists in South Wales is of more importance than the deputation to the Minister of Labour and the debates in the House of Commons - a point of view with which I can only express surprise."

The *Manchester Guardian*, which can hardly be viewed as a mouthpiece for revolutionary communism, reported (February 3, 1935) that in fact the day before in South Wales, some 300,000 unemployed workers and their supporters had marched. These were "the few communists" that Mr EM Thomas contemptuously dismissed.

Eventually, even the likes of the TUC and Labour Party were pressurised into doing something. The National Council of Labour, representing the TUC, the Labour Party and the Co-operative Society, at last, on February 1, 1935, broke the official labour movement leadership's deafening silence over the attacks on the unemployed. It issued an *Appeal to the Public Conscience*.

Wal Hannington blasted the *Appeal* as "... the most empty and harmless document that had ever been issued in the working class movement. It called for no action whatsoever, the strongest passage in it being an appeal to the clergy to focus public attention on the hardship caused by the new unemployment regulations. It contributed absolutely nothing to the struggle which was raging against the government." (*Unemployed Struggles*, p312)

Sound familiar? Nothing much changes in 50 odd years of Labourite history. The leadership of the Labour Party/TUC still abhors militant, independent action of the working class: as evidenced by their more recent record of fighting unemployment, they still prefer the company of vicars to the militant unemployed.

## Unemployed Struggles - 1979-1988

The shabby continuity of the treatment of the unemployed by the official leadership of the labour movement since the re-emergence of mass unemployment in the 1970s/80s is depressingly obvious. Essentially, the unemployed have either been totally ignored by the parliament wind bags of her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, or cynically used in electoral/publicity fodder in lack-lustre stunts.

•The opportunist leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain initiated the Peoples' Marches for Jobs of '81 and '83, on both occasions receiving the support from the TUC and Labour Party. The Eurocommunist Industrial Organiser of the CP, Peter Carter, made clear, however, the political ethos which guided the march when he said that "... those central elements of government economic strategy which is creating unemployment" would provide "the opportunity for the broadest possible alliance of all who agree with the central demand, which of course ranges from bishops to bricklayers, from non-Thatcherite Tories to revolutionary socialists".

The Peoples' Marches, characteristically, left no permanent organisation of the unemployed in their wake. They were feeble, class collaborationist attempts to generate gooey sympathy for the plight of the unemployed from various bourgeois pundits: not attempts to give the unemployed a fighting organisation of their own to fight for their rights.

To maintain the cross class nature of the Peoples' Marches, the Eurocommunist organisers even banned anti-Tory slogans being shouted by the marchers! Such amorphous, vaguely 'do-gooder' politics could not even serve the electoral ambitions of the Labour Party leaders, and these type of marches were junked, leaving no trace of ever having existed apart from a few fading t-shirts and jackets that old marchers still occasionally break out for demos.

•Leaving aside embarrassing flops like the Jobs Express which even its organisers, the TUC, would best like forgotten, the next major 'initiative' from the labour movement on unemployment came with the Jarrow '86 stunt, aiming to emulate the begging-bowl '36 march, with the difference that this time around the marchers were to be used as cannon fodder to cynically enhance the Labour Party's pre-election propaganda.

Jarrow '86 committed itself to the election of that reformist shibboleth, "the next Labour government", which was presented as the answer to all the problems of the unemployed. Given that this was the sole reason for the existence of the campaign, it was hardly surprising that the organisers of the '86 march refused to address themselves to the key task of *organising* the unemployed. The "high profile" Jarrow '86 roadshow rolled into town and then rolled out again, often unnoticed by the unemployed themselves, let alone the mass of ordinary people.

Jarrow '86 Ltd was not even interested in unemployed workers being mobilised for its November 2 '86 final demonstration in London. Everything was in the hands of the Walworth Road bureaucracy, respectable trade union officials and expense account Labour councillors. Everything was for 'the next Labour government' and the consumption of the bosses' media.

In fact, the 3,000 who did turn up on that final demo were warned that slogans and placards had been banned on the march: it was to walk, funeral-like, in total silence to maintain its "dignity", as the TUC pot-bellies put it.

In effect, the Labour Party organisers of Jarrow '86 were attempting to perpetrate a cruel con trick on the unemployed. In their glossy publicity material, they insisted that "Labour has the will to solve the twin evils of mass unemployment and social deprivation" and that consequently, all we had to do was vote Labour at the next general election (June '87).

The fact is that British capitalism has relentlessly declined over the past 50 years and the fragility of the much lauded 'boom' that it is now supposed to be in the midst of is evident. So, if truth be told, all the utopian plans Labour announced at the time of the last election for a massive increase in public spending to boost the domestic economy would be unceremoniously dropped with the first run on the pound or stock market wobble.

Who could doubt it? As we have shown, to fight unemployment you have to fight the system that breeds it - capitalism. The merit of Kinnock (practically his only one) lies in the fact that he does not even make a pretence that a Labour Party government under his

leadership would make such an attempt.

## The UWC

Many working class activists will have come across the militant campaigning organisation, the Unemployed Workers Charter. The launch of the UWC was in fact sponsored by *The Leninist* to counter the poisonous message of the Jarrow '86 Labour Party stunt. It followed the march's route down the country and in every city and town where we stopped, we agitated for the *organisation* of the unemployed into a modern day equivalent of the NUWM.

The job of mobilising the unemployed for the November 2 demonstration also fell to the UWC. Its posters were plastered all along the route of Jarrow '86 and in all the working class areas of London itself. Its leaflets and broadsheets were distributed at dole offices calling on the unemployed to greet the Jarrow marchers on November 2. The UWC fought for unemployed workers centres to use the Jarrow '86 march as an opportunity to raise the whole question of organising the unemployed, despite the electoral preoccupations of the Labourite march organisers.

The UWC's agitation was rewarded on November 2, when we had the largest contingent on the march - a tremendous achievement for a new organisation. The UWC smashed the ban on political slogans with militant chants and placards and injected a real note of unemployed anger into the dull, official movement proceedings.

In the last two years, the UWC has, in national and local actions, built a proud and unrivalled record of campaigning for the rights of the unemployed. Today, it stands as the largest and most dynamic organisation of its type in Britain. Through actions like the lobby of the TUC last month - the largest lobby since the end of the miners' strike - the question of unemployment remains in the forefront of politics in Britain.

The UWC is *not* the mass national unemployed workers organisation that is needed and it makes no pretence to be such a movement. But neither is the UWC simply a vehicle for propaganda. It exists as the nucleus for the type of reborn NUWM-type organisation that is desperately needed by our class today.

But a key lesson of the 1920s and 30s that needs to be fully grasped today is that the NUWM was only able to be a mass, dynamic movement of the unemployed because at its core, providing strategic direction and leading cadres, was the then revolutionary Communist Party of Great Britain. It was this organisation that provided the cohesion and clarity that enabled the NUWM to organise up to 100,000 in its ranks on an explicitly revolutionary, anti-capitalist platform.

The CPGB can no longer play that role: the CPGB has died as a revolutionary organisation, killed by a thousand opportunist cuts over the past 60 plus years. *The Leninist* was born from its ranks and fights to reforge it for revolution. Ours is not a struggle to 'reform' the existing Euro CPGB from within: this is impossible now. We stand today as the core of the genuine Communist Party that our class has to reforge in order to take on the bosses and win.

Such a party does not come from a few hundred like-minded students deciding to Tipex out the 'Tendency' or 'Group' description from their headed notepaper and substituting the word 'Party'. A Communist Party is built by winning the vanguard of the working class on the basis of *theoretical* clarity, and the unity of this revolutionary clarity with *practice*.

*The Leninist*, through initiatives like the UWC, has started to build this unity by combining its strong theory with action on the streets and outside the dole offices. But there remains a tremendous amount of work to be done.

Members of the Labour Party, many of whom would claim to stand for the interests of the working class, have to ask themselves some sharp questions. Do they really stand for the unemployed; or are they just foot soldiers for the openly pro-capitalist Kinnock? Do they really want to see socialism in this country; or are they, like their leadership, simply interested in the electoral fortunes of the Labour Party? Are they out to manage capitalism; or are they out to *smash* it?

Comrades, the Leninist road is a hard and testing one. But it is only this road at the end of the day that can possibly see the victory of our class and the building of a world fit for humans to live in at last. All partisans of the working class should join us on that road.

Ian Mahoney



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## Ireland — the cause of Labour?

**T**HE IRISH PEOPLE are all too familiar with Britain's concepts of justice and fair play. As the Gibraltar events prove, this amounts to shooting unarmed Irish republicans in the back and stitching up the inquest.

There is nothing new in this. In fact, it is what British rule must base itself on to maintain its control of the sectarian and artificial statelet of 'Northern Ireland' — Ireland's six occupied counties.

British governments, both Tory and Labour have used violence, terror, lies and intimidation throughout the 19 years of the Irish war. Those on the left who are so fond of denouncing 'Tory' crimes in Ireland would do well to remember that it was Labour which introduced 'Ulsterisation' and the withdrawal of political status for Irish POWs which led eventually to the death of ten hunger strikers in 1981.

The most barbarous murders since Bloody Sunday — ostensibly by loyalist gangs, but widely thought to have been covert operations for British forces — took place under Labour administrations. Roy 'Butcher' Mason, Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland during the '70s, still has a significant security presence around his home because of the hatred he has provoked among Irish republicans. And no one should forget that it was a Labour government which sent the troops in to start with, in August 1969.

However, the Labour Party out of office can afford to indulge in a little tub thumping. Remember Denis Healey promising to "squeeze the rich until the pips squeak"? As has been proven time and time again such statements are meaningless when it comes to practice. To put it another way, they are lies.

But even if we were to 'suspend disbelief' when it came to the pronouncements of the Labour Party, we would have little cause to rejoice in the Labour Party's new policy document on Ireland, released on September 21. Besides, it would be very strange if, during a period where Kinnock is dragging his party further and further to the right, he was to proffer any kind of 'progressive' stand on Ireland. Yet for those who place their hopes in the socialist future on the pro-capitalist Labour Party, such an inexplicable *volte face* must be conjured up. Thus, for the *Morning Star*, Kinnock's Irish document is "one step forward" (September 22).

Little wonder that the reformist and implicitly pro-imperialist *Star* can find something to cheer about in such a reformist and overtly pro-imperialist document. Those who genuinely want to see a free Ireland cannot afford to view Kinnock's pale pink party through rose tinted glasses. We must label his policy document for what it is — pro-imperialist poison.

So let's look at the 'meat' of the document; or rather the lack of it.

•The loyalist veto. Part of British imperialism's justification for keeping its jackboot in the Six Counties is that the majority in this artificial entity wish it so. Thus, the loyalist majority in the Six Counties have a 'veto' on any proposal of British withdrawal and Irish unification. This convenient situation is no accident. It is the direct result of a carefully engineered arrangement on Britain's part, enforced through economic sops and institutionalised Orange bigotry, to ensure the loyalty of Protestant workers. And the term 'majority' can only have a meaning within the illegitimate sectarian statelet. Britain's justification for its presence is an excuse of its own manufacture. As negotiations around the London-Dublin Accord proved, it is a myth — one whose construction is founded on a growing pile of Irish corpses.

How does Labour's document approach the 'loyalist veto'? Formally it rejects it. But its practical implications are exactly the same. It makes any withdrawal or unification conditional on the consent of the (Protestant) majority: "While consent must, by definition, be freely given, no group or party will be allowed to exercise a veto on policies designed to win consent for unification." No group or party, no. But then this has never been imperialism's formulation. It has been that the "majority" which holds the deck, for form's sake. Allowing for disturbances like those around the London-Dublin Accord, this has prevented the sort of trouble caused by Carson and his UVF in 1914. Britain abides by the wishes of the 'majority', and the way it engineers it assures the fact that the majority remains loyal.

The *Independent* pointed out the contradiction between this and the document's paper commitment to Irish unification. Quick as a flash, Labour spokesperson on Northern Ireland, Kevin McNamara, penned a letter back, and in the process sank further into the quagmire of his eclecticism. "Economic harmonisation" are the two magic words which cut the Gordian knot. He continues: "It is our firm belief that the benefits of this harmonisation will transform attitudes in Northern Ireland." (September 23)

What this amounts to is a slicing of the shrinking economic cake of the Six Counties, so all workers, irrespective of denomination, get an equal portion — roughly equivalent in these lean times to buggery all. One can imagine the reaction this would generate among the loyalist working class. It would make the Ulster Workers Council strike, and the attendant intimidation of nationalists, look like an extended lunch break.

But, fear not. Should this utopia not work out, Kevin still has one more card up his sleeve: "If this 'economic harmonisation' proves not to be the case, then there is nothing in the document which threatens the constitutional status of

Northern Ireland." We don't know about anyone else, but that's what we would call a veto. And a fairly secure one at that.

•Troops out ... when? Needless to say, the document does not call for troops out now. It even rejects the reformist left's slogan of troops out in the life-time of one parliament. Given the fact that a Labour government is hardly on the cards, that is a very long time indeed. No, even this is too ambitious.

Neil Kinnock, in his speech to launch the document, said that any commitment to specify any time period for withdrawal was nothing more than the "politics of Pontius Pilate". Seeing as British imperialism and its Labour Party have been crucifying the Irish people for so long, this is hypocrisy indeed.

Labour's pledge to withdraw is at best nebulous. It is phrased with great care to say precisely ... nothing. Read on for a case study in 'officials' vacuous doubletalk: "While the logic and thrust of Labour's policy involves a British withdrawal, preceded by a progressive process of disengagement, this would be an integral part of progress towards unification."

"Since it would be impossible to predetermine a timetable for the latter, it would be folly to impose one on the former. While unification must involve withdrawal, precipitated withdrawal might preclude unification." QED. This is no concrete commitment to do anything. Instead, it is a mere smokescreen of billowing clouds of Labourite hot air. There can be no doubt that the document offers no comfort for anyone who wishes to see Ireland free, let alone for the IRA, as the *Independent* accused it of doing.

•A 'sovereign' Ireland. This is the last thing on the minds of Messrs Kinnock and McNamara. Instead of an Ireland ruled by its people, the document still speaks of "direct rule" and "devolved government" (welcome back Stormont!) within the Six Counties. It also speaks of "an effective security policy" on an all Ireland basis, drawing in the forces of the Twenty-six Counties.

In reality, insofar as it promises anything but a repackaging of the status quo, what is offered is closer cooperation with (in real terms, influence over) British imperialism's junior partners, the Twenty-six County bourgeoisie. This is something that Irish and British workers alike have every interest in opposing.

Couched in liberal democratic phrases, the Labour Party is proving once again what James Connolly stated before the former had even stained its hands with the blood of Irish republicans: "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist republic, your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the array of commercial and indi-

vidualist institutions she has placed in this country ..."

In addition to this, the working class in the Twenty-six Counties has its 'own' bourgeoisie sitting on its shoulders. The British Labour Party would have the weight borne by it added to further still. Little wonder that Fianna Fail and Finé Gael, the two main capitalist parties in the Twenty-six Counties, could see nothing wrong with the British Labour Party's document.

This cannot be the reaction of genuine anti-imperialists. We do not want a 'peace' tailor-made to suit the interests of imperialism. We want a peace which suits the Irish people, and specifically the Irish working class. It is vital that Kinnock's dreams of a Thirty-two County 'Free State' are exposed and defeated, both in theory and practice.

Indoing this, it is not only necessary to politically defeat this miserable document, but to also expose those 'lefts' who accept fundamentally the same ground: that is, that Britain can have a progressive role in Ireland.

The consequences of such an illusion in imperialism is a retreat from the principled demand of "Troops Out Now!". The logic of this standpoint, whatever the subjective intentions of those who hold it, is inexorably drawn towards imperialist apologia. After all, if you do not demand troops out now, by definition you must hold that British imperialism has some progressive role to play in Ireland.

British imperialism is not some precocious child that can be forced to clear up the mess that it has made. It is a dangerous, rabid beast. There is only one thing which can be done with such creatures. Some would argue — as do Kinnock and Co. — that "immediate disengagement" would create "a bloodbath". This is sick hypocrisy. There is already a vicious war being fought by British imperialism. It is the problem. The longer Britain has its claws in the flesh of Ireland, the more blood will flow.

But it is not a Lebanon-type scenario which the imperialist politicians, both Tory and Labour, fear. It is a Cuba or a Vietnam. For all their sanctimonious 'bloodbath' lectures, they are prepared to see the butchery of many more than have already died at their hands in the Irish war to prevent such a revolutionary outcome.

The true meaning of anti-imperialism is to make common cause with Irish freedom fighters in the struggle for such an outcome: an outcome which will bring not some equitable Zimbabwe-type settlement, but see Britain kicked out, as happened with the US in Vietnam, "clinging to the skids of their helicopters".

This is the only consistent socialist and anti-imperialist approach to the question. And, as Marx explained, it is inextricably linked with the socialist revolution in Britain: "the national emancipation of Ireland is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the first condition of their [ie. British workers — AM] own social emancipation." (Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p408).

The fight for a movement taking such a stand and based among the working class in Britain is way overdue. For too long those who present withdrawal from Ireland swathed in the red, white and blue, have met no effective challenge. The issue is not saving taxpayers' money. It is in winning Irish freedom. *The Leninist* is fighting to put this into practice, by mounting a challenge to the implicitly pro-imperialist 'Time To Go!' charter, demanding troops out now under the banner of the Hands Off Ireland! campaign. Such a challenge can lay the basis for the mass anti-imperialist movement that both the Irish and British revolutions demand.

Alan Merrik

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